marketable surplus of foodgrains. The farmer is free to sell his produce to the Government agencies at MSP or to the private traders, as is advantageous to him.

In the last Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2006-07, there has been more active participation by multinationals and private players.

A proposal to purchase foodgrains at a rate higher than the MSP has been formulated in the Department of Food and Public Distribution.

Shortage in wheat procurement

445. SHRI MOTILAL VORA:
MS. SUSHILA TIRIYA:

Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state:

(a) the quantum of buffer stock in lakh tonnes during the current year;

(b) whether it is a fact that in spite of official procurement of wheat, the buffer stock has not been met;

(c) whether the shortage is likely to have an impact on the rural employment scheme;

(d) if so, the steps Government are taking to avoid such a situation; and

(e) the reasons for less official procurement of wheat?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION (DR. AKHILESH PRASAD SINGH): (a) The actual stock of foodgrains vis-a-vis buffer norms are as under:—

(Fig. in lakh tonnes)

As on	Buffer Norms		Actual Stock	
	Wheat	Rice	Wheat	Rice
1.4.06	40.00	122.00	20.09	136.73
1.7.06	171.00	98.00	82.07	111.44

(b) The procurement of wheat during current Rabi Marketing Seasons (RMS) 2006-07 was 92.23 lakh tonnes as compared to 147.71 lakh tonnes during Rabi Marketing Season (RMS) 2005-06. Due to decline in procurement by 55.48 lakh tonnes buffer norms have not been met.

(c) No, Sir.

(d) Steps taken by Government to manage the dwindling stocks of wheat in the Central Pool are as follows:—

(i) The allocation of wheat under Targeted Public Distribution System (TPDS) has been streamlined for all the States/UTs. on the basis of past offtake, without reducing the overall entitlement of foodgrains @ 35 kg. per household per month

(ii) In order to cater to the local tastes as well as to help the farmers in production of foodgrains other than wheat and rice, a higher allocation of coarse-grains (e.g. Jowar, Bajra, Maize, Ragi, etc.) at highly subsidized rate is being made to various State Government who have demanded for the same.

(iii) A decision has been taken to stop the sale of wheat under the Open Market Sale Scheme (OMSS-D) during the year 2006-07.

(iv) A decision has been taken to import 35 lakh MTs of wheat.

(e) The reasons for less procurement:—

(i) Lower than targeted production of wheat in Crop year 2005-06.

(ii) High ruling market prices.

(iii) Negative market sentiments due to low level of wheat stocks in the Central Pool.

(iv) Low market arrivals of wheat in RMS 2006-07.

Liberalization of marketing operations

446. SHRI MOINUL HASSAN: Will the Minister of CONSUMER AFFAIRS, FOOD AND PUBLIC DISTRIBUTION be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government are under pressure to liberalize marketing